STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IOWA
IOWA DEPARTMENT OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS
The Annals of Iowa

Volume 45 | Number 4 (Spring 1980) pps. 322-324

Order Upon the Land: the U. S. Rectangular Land Survey and the Upper Mississippi Country

ISSN 0003-4827

exploration. Unfortunately, the concluding chapter, in which many loose ends might have been brought together, does not adequately come to grips with this or any of the other paradoxical elements in Hoover's personality, public philosophy and service. Even so, Burner makes some significant contributions in suggesting an approach that is useful in interpreting Hoover's response to the depression, and in providing many intriguing points of departure for more thorough studies of a crucial presidency.

Hoover's belief in voluntarism and the mobilization of local efforts to provide relief may have been overly naive; but it must also be seen as proceeding from his world war experiences with the growth of giant bureaucracies and his resulting concern for the future. He was convinced that large-scale dependence on government assistance could not be discarded once the crisis had passed. As historian William Appleman Williams has pointed out: "Hoover told us that if we (the neighbors of the stricken) cannot be roused to provide such help, and the way the government helps them . . . is not handled *very* carefully . . . there will be hell to pay . . . bureaucratic stateism that would devalue the human beings it claims to save . . . We now know these were legitimate fears."

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Order upon the Land: The U.S. Rectangular Land Survey and the Upper Mississippi Country, by Hildegard Binder Johnson. New York: Oxford University Press, 1976. pp. 268. Illustrations, maps, notes, $9.00.

Hildegarde Binder Johnson, for many years a distinguished professor of historical geography at Macalester College, has poured years of research and thought into this tight (242 pages of text) monograph on the upper Mississippi Country. The scene is that stretch of hills and valleys on either side of the Great River from Clinton (Iowa) to within sight of Minneapolis-St. Paul. Narrow at its southern and northern points, it is up to 140 miles in the vicinity of Madison (Wisconsin), and includes portions of the present states of Illinois, Iowa, Wisconsin, and Minnesota. The themes are the nature and texture of the land, and the impact of the rectangular survey system on the patterns of settlement and economic exploitation. The author writes of the book's

purpose: "The raison d'etre of this book, however, is not only to discuss the survey's possible antecedents or genesis but to take a look at how it affected the settlement landscape of a part of rural America I have come to know well—the Upper Mississippi Hill Country." (from the Preface)

To achieve her objectives, Johnson has marshalled her multi-disciplinary approach to the question of land occupation and use. Travel accounts, plat books, surveyor's notes, monographs and articles from the disciplines of history and geography, county and town histories, all find a place in her intellectual tapestry. To these written sources, she has added photographs, topographic maps, plat maps, etchings, and so forth. The author provides much for the reader in the way of visual assistance and explanation, and she writes, "Pictures and visual experiences, then, are not merely incidental but are integrated with the text." The reader also needs to make contributions: a commitment to follow a long and detailed story with several side excursions and to consult Erwin Raisz' "Landforms of the United States" and road maps of the several states involved, a determination to follow the author's tight and detailed account of this region's hills and valleys of the thousands of people who pioneered here and who make this region home. Those who will take the time to give of themselves will be amply rewarded. This is no easy Sunday afternoon read. It is an intellectual exercise of a high order.

Johnson has divided her study into three parts. Part one is a discussion of "The Origin of the Rectangular Survey," with allusion to the land settlement experience of the French in North America, the Roman precedents, the transition of land from communal use to individual ownership, and the attendant changes in techniques for laying out the land. Her discussion of the technical parts of the Ordinance of 1785 and early surveys are perhaps the best we have in print on that significant subject (pp. 43-49). The second part is "The Survey of the Upper Mississippi Country," as the study moves from the general to the increasingly specific. It may be that the first part of this section (Chapter 4) belongs in the first section on the Survey and its implementation, but no matter. Johnson continues an excellent detailed discussion of the history of the rectangular survey in the first thirty years or so of its "implementation." She gives careful attention to the reduction of the tract for survey and purchase from 640 to forty acres (between 1796 and 1832), and rightly so, for its significance of the surveyors and settlers alike, not to mention later historians of the public domain. A discussion of the early occupation of the Hill Country follows, with special attention to lead mining (87-97), lumbering (97-104), town sites

(104-15), and the impact of each activity on the land and on the survey system, and vice-versa. She closes her second section with a discussion of the functional impact of the surveying system on the land and its people. Here she considers political boundary lines, especially the township and county, and state and the system of the sale of the public domain. The checkerboard image contrasted with the many irregularities that the author identifies and discusses, the woodlot, early agriculture, fencing, and roads, all reflected the first survey lines. A shorter section on land and water management in the twentieth century closes the book.

Johnson concludes that for the Upper Mississippi Hill Country, the "forty" was "an effective modular unit and a formative influence." (220) Given the uneven nature of the land; the effect was often awkward, but the survey lines remained on the land in the form of roads, fence lines, and towns. In the end, the rectangular survey provided an "orderly workable basis of allotment." (221)

The great contribution of this volume—aside from its multitude of references and detailed descriptions—is Johnson's reaffirmation of the importance of our eyes in making geographical and historical judgments. In an era of impersonal numbers and an exegesis of documentary materials, she reminds us that ordinances and legislation have modified the face of the land. She invites our examination of the world around us with a view to identifying and analyzing their modification. We would be well advised to follow her lead.

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Kansas, A History, by Kenneth S. Davis. New York: W. W. Norton, and Nashville: American Association for State and Local History, 1976. pp. xiii, 226. Illustrations, maps, notes, suggestions for further reading, index. $9.95.

People who profess to know about such things will tell you that real state patriotism thrives today in only three states: Texas (of course), Alaska (understandably, because of its isolation) and Kansas. Why in the world Kansas, asks the non-Kansan; and in his "personal overture" to *Kansas; A Bicentennial History*, Kenneth Davis ponders this question as he relates anecdotes of expatriate Kansans returning with relief and even thanksgiving to their homeland.